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Week of
February 10, 1941

Critics'

THEATRE REVIEWS

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**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play during the week of February 10, 1941.*
†"Tanyard Street" opened Tuesday, February 4th, at the Little Theatre.
†"Liberty Jones" opened Wednesday, February 5th, at the Shubert Theatre.
†"Boudoir" opened Friday, February 7th, at the Golden Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

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NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
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NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN

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"Boudoir"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *February 8, 1941*

"Boudoir" Tells of A Light Lady and a Couple of Fellows

"Boudoir," drama by Jacques Deval. Produced by Jules Chambrun at the John Golden Theatre, New York, Feb. 7, 1941.

★+

By BURNS MANTLE

"BOUDOIR" is the first play that the French dramatist, Jacques Deval, has written in English, according to the reports of his best friends.

The evidence presented at the John Golden Theatre last night, where the play was produced, would indicate that while he may be writing in English he is still thinking in French. And not very clearly, either.

Probably he had better go back to writing in French. And let his adapters do the real work.

"Boudoir" is a foolish and empty boudoir drama. Stuffy with plot, uninteresting in its characters, stupid in its story.

Only the actors give it any excuse for Broadway presentation, and they are severely handicapped by Mr. Deval's cumbersome direction.

It is a little difficult to understand how the author of the hugely successful "Tovarich," and the less successful, but still acceptable "Cardboard Lover" and "Mademoiselle," could have suffered so great a falling off in his sense of stage values, even if he has been living and working in Hollywood for several years.

Lady and Lovers

In "Boudoir" Helen Twelvetrees, an attractive ingenue who also has been doing picture work on the coast, is playing an aging gentleman's mistress. It is back in the bustle era (1882) and she is surprised to recognize in her new butler a man she had married and divorced some years before we meet her.

The butler had the makings of a genius, the piano being his passion, but he took first to drink and then to crime. Now he is reformed and married to the able young woman who does the maid's work.

After that the Deval story is not so easily followed. I had an idea a dark fellow the butler chap met in Leavenworth Prison, who turns up as Helen's second lover, was going to strangle her as soon as the curtain was down, but I may be wrong. Or maybe the butler's disillusioned wife was coming back to do the job. Or maybe she had put poison in the champagne. Or perhaps I just wasn't paying attention.

Performances as good as could be expected, especially those of Else Argal (Mrs. Deval) as the maid, and Staats Cotsworth as the unhappy butler. The boudoir set by Raymond Sovey is too good for the play. A hopeful audience tittered a good deal.

Reprinted from
NEW YORK TIMES
February 8, 1941

Jacques Deval's 'Boudoir' Describes Sin on Madison Avenue in the Last Century

By BROOKS ATKINSON

TRUST Jacques Deval to entitle his drama "Boudoir." Although he is writing in English he has not forgotten that he is French; and the people who saw his play at the John Golden last evening must try not to forget that he is also the author of "Mademoiselle," "Her Cardboard Lover" and "Tovarich." For "Boudoir" is solemn buncombe, steeped in sin and written in English that sounds like a foreign language.

After sitting in startled silence through most of the first act, the audience could not keep from snickering and finally laughing aloud as the plot became increasingly humorless and the language ostentatiously elegant. Probably it was rude to laugh at the English. Mr. Deval has tried so hard to make it correct that it results in being like a gas-light museum piece. His English is infinitely better than this column's French could possibly be.

But Mr. Deval cannot escape responsibility for the plot, which is a genuine museum piece, compounded of stock cocotte, an elderly lover and a mad genius in whom an unfinished sonata is impishly sleeping. Inside a luxurious setting by Raymond Sovey, some courageous actors in handsome costumes play "Boudoir" like a funeral ode. Mr. Deval's direction is phlegmatic. As the iniquitous heroine, Helen Twelvetrees is conspicuously monotonous, and Taylor Holmes is not notably devastating as a ripening roué. Staats Cotsworth plays the addled genius well enough to cover some of the lines. Mr. Deval's pretty wife, Else Argal, acts the part of a bewitched, bothered and bewildered maid with dainty manners and sweetness of style.

There is something about a boudoir that brings out the worst in masculine playwrights. Outside the "Boudoir" Mr. Deval is a wit who is currently credited with having exclaimed "Veni, Vidi, Vichy."

Reprinted from
NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN
February 8, 1941

Deval Play, 'Boudoir,' Opens

JACQUES DEVAL, who created "Tovarich," brought Helen Twelvetrees to Broadway at the John Golden Theatre last night in a gilded cage via "Boudoir," a drama of the days of grandpa when keeping a lady in a flat was strictly on the devilish side.

The play is the old story with the old "wages of sin" moral but it has several new twists. As Cora Ambershell, Miss Twelvetrees is the mistress of a gallant old playboy—if there were playboys in the '80's—who sets her up in a house on Madison ave., with butlers, maids, grooms, stables and what not.

Cora has a lurid past and also a yen for handsome young men like Enrico Palmeri, a murderer masquerading as a doctor. Cora's background is revealed to the audience, but not to her lovers (young and old) when she hires a new butler and maid who are married.

Reformed Butler

The new butler turns out to be the husband Cora divorced while he is in prison. He also is a genius on the piano who finds his inspiration in the bottle. His new wife, however, has reformed him.

Cora decides it is safer to keep the butler and maid in her service until she can have Edgar Massuber, her elderly lover, go through the legal procedure of adopting her as a niece and keeping their affair respectable.

Meanwhile, the handsome Enrico pops on the scene and Cora falls for him like two Empire State Buildings. The butler, Gaylord, recognizes him as a prison pal who has the nasty habit of going around murdering women, leaving his cuffs behind with laundry marks to identify them as the property of some ship passenger departed for parts unknown.

He tells this to his wife, Oriane, who decides to tell her mistress about it when Gaylord suddenly decides to quit. When he tries to hand in his notice Cora gets him drunk and pushes him out into the street.

Date With Killer

Oriane finds out about this, Gaylord is recaptured and taken to an alcoholic ward and then Oriane, after a terrific battle with her conscience, decides not to unmask Enrico, the killer.

Enrico, meanwhile has been attentive to Ethel Shannon from whom she wrested Massuber in the first place. Massuber's daughter, Phoebe, trying to break up her father's affair with Cora, stages several dramatic scenes, in one of which she accuses Cora of now trying to steal Enrico from Ethel.

The play ends with Cora keeping a rendezvous with Enrico, while Oriane keeps mum. Enrico takes off his cuffs and the curtain drops as he is winding his ever ready strangler's hands around Cora's throat, ostensiby to make off with her jewels.

Bursts of Laughter

As is sometimes the case, in dramas of the mauve decade, several of the most dramatic scenes drew bursts of hilarity from the audience. And when Jeraldine Dvorak as the Shannon lady waxes profane by crying "Creamed Peaces" the first nighters were convulsed.

Miss Twelvetrees gets excellent support from Else Argal as Oriane whose appearance in "Boudoir" marks her Broadway debut. She has a fine dramatic quality which, due to the lack of seriousness on the other side of the footlights, suffers in spots.

Taylor Holmes as Edgar Massuber was well received but that's perennial with him. Josephine Stanton as Phoebe does a good job as does Staats Cotsworth as Gaylord the butler. Henry Brandon could be a little heavier villain.—(L. R.)

"Boudoir"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *February 8, 1941*

'Boudoir,' Preposterous Melodrama, Opens at the Golden Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

A WHIFF of laughing gas from the old, old theater was wafted into the John Golden last evening and actors grimly kept their faces straight while the audience giggled itself weak. This was not at all what Jacques Deval intended when he wrote "Boudoir" nor was it what Jacques Chambrun intended when he put it on. It is hard to imagine what either Jacques did intend, but it was certainly not what happened.

M. Deval was the author, in other days, of such saucy plays as "Her Cardboard Lover" and "Tovarich," both of which reached us in adaptation. "Boudoir," on the other hand, is right out of M. Deval's own head and was written in English. It's a mighty queer drama for any language—about as preposterous a drama, on the whole, as has been submitted since September. Its plot is a weird tangle and its dialogue is, on the whole, stranger than its plot. You don't see things like "Boudoir" very often nowadays.

It's period is 1882 and the intricately implausible events of which it tells occur in the boudoir of Cora Ambershell's house on Madison Avenue. Cora is a minx, supported by a man who wears a cape. She employs a new maid and butler, only to discover that the butler is really a mad musician to whom she had been married before he was sent to prison because he had written a sonata. (Or am I a little mixed up here?) She is plotting to get herself adopted by the sister or her lover but she falls in love with a man named Enrico Palfieri. But Palfieri is really a villain who goes around strangling women for their jewels. During the butler's period in the Kansas State Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Palfieri had been there too, hiding from the police.

Cora gives the mad butler whisky and lets him play the piano, which makes him simply wild. This is unwise of her because the maid, who is the butler's wife, discovers her perfidy and doesn't tell her about Palfieri—just leaves her there to be strangled over the champagne. And so as the curtain falls his strong fingers are closing about her white throat and she, still all innocence, is looking up into his eyes. And the members of the audience are looking for their hats and coats and feeling a little embarrassed at having snickered so.

This absurdity is acted in a variety of styles by a cast which prominently includes Helen Twelvetrees, Taylor Holmes, Staats Cotsworth and Else Argal. Miss Argal deserves a better fate. And M. Deval had better go back to writing in French and being adapted out of it.

'BOUDOIR'

A play in three acts, by Jacques Deval; directed by the author; settings by Raymond Sovey; presented at the John Golden Theater on February 7, 1941, by Jacques Chambrun. The cast:

Doris Williams	Jane Donner
Cora Ambershell	Helen Twelvetrees
Culver	Richard Irving
Phillips	Curtis Cooksey
Phoebe Massuber	Josephine Stanton
Ethel Shannon	Jeraldine Dvorak
Enrico Palfieri	Henry Brandon
Edgar Massuber	Taylor Holmes
Gaylord	Staats Cotsworth
Oriane	Else Argal

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *February 8, 1941*

'Boudoir,' by Jacques Deval, Reaches the Golden Theatre

By WILELLA WALDORF

WHEN Jacques Deval made his first trip to America during the Broadway engagement of his play, "Her Cardboard Lover," starring the late Jeanne Eagels, he was impressed with the prevailing sadness of New York. Returning to his home in Paris, he told Le Journal that New York was the saddest city he had ever visited. "Nobody on the streets ever smiles," he said.

Later on during a busy career as playwright, theatre manager, and film maker, Mr. Deval had occasion to revise his opinion. His plays, "Tovarich" and "Mademoiselle," were both adapted into English and had long runs here. Mr. Deval himself has spent some years in Hollywood and now considers himself an American. His latest play, "Boudoir," was written in English, and it was presented by his friend, Jacques Chambrun, last night at the John Golden Theatre with the author as stage director, and Mrs. Deval (Else Argal) in one of the leading roles.

Mr. Deval, as those who have enjoyed his earlier, more Gallic comedies, may remember, goes in rather heavily for elegant interiors, elaborate intrigues, uniformed footmen educated above their station, fascinatingly intelligent ladies' maids and all sorts of gay fripperies indelibly associated in the American theatregoing mind with smart Parisian comedy.

Intrigue in 1882

"Boudoir" is set amid the almost stupifying luxury of Madison Avenue, New York, in 1882, and concerns the comings and goings in the satin, plush, fur-rugged boudoir of a "lady" who calls herself Cora Ambershell. With a foolish old millionaire tottering around in her wake, she carries on an affair with a fascinating foreigner, parries the thrusts of the millionaire's irate daughter, hatches elaborate schemes to outwit her rivals, and recognizes in her new butler an ex-husband just out of Leavenworth. The new maid is his new wife, and to make things even worse, he is a concert pianist who once wrote several bars of a sonata.

The intricate plot with its myriad surprises—at one point it looked as if everybody but the blooded saddle horse was masquerading as somebody else—kept the audience in a constant state of alarm, and the town talk of 1882 combined with some rare verbiage, apparently Mr. Deval's own contribution to the festivities, induced so much laughter in the second act that a number of people decided they were experiencing a sort of Boucicault revival and waxed very merry over some of the goings-on.

When the curtain fell on Act 2, a bewildered lady swept past us into the aisle, exclaiming: "Maybe you're *supposed* to laugh at it."

All a Joke?

It was at this point that we decided definitely Mr. Deval was slyly poking us serious-minded New Yorkers in the ribs and having his little joke at the expense of our ancestors. Perhaps he still feels this is the saddest city he ever visited, and is bent on bringing a smile to our dreary little faces if he has to toss in everything he happens to recall out of a hectic theatrical career.

A faint suspicion that Mr. Deval was just having us on pricked us as early as Act I when, in the midst of a really amazing stream of small-talk, Miss Helen Twelvetrees, playing Cora, remarked casually that she came from "a small parish in Indiana." She didn't at all, of course. Hadn't she trekked through the music halls of Sacramento, Des Moines, Charleston, San Francisco, Chicago and Duluth? (Or were those the places where the fake Italian doctor committed his first six murders, leaving a cuff behind with a bogus laundry mark to fool the police?)

Well, no matter. The fact remains that Mr. Deval stuffed so many American geographical references into the script of "Boudoir" that it often sounded like a time table, while Taylor Holmes skeeddaddled and pish-tushed over the stage and everybody, by some miraculous process known only to the acting profession, kept faces straight and plunged on.

Else Argal's Debut

Mr. Deval's little joke was somewhat toned down now and then by the fact that his wife, a French actress named Else Argal, playing the maid, actually succeeded quite often in turning the whole business into a serious play. Miss Argal is a tall, willowy young woman of considerd poise on the stage, and she speaks with a marked but charming accent. Last night was her debut here and in several of her scenes with Staats Cotsworth, the butler-pianist-husband, she made us forget for a spell that something very peculiar was in progress at the Golden Theatre.

Mr. Cotsworth, who speaks well, had some of the most disheartening things to do and say, and was further burdened with the fact that he came from Leavenworth and was on the way to Bellevue.

We had no intention of giving away any of the twists and turnings that lead eventually to something pretty staggering at the final curtain. It would hardly be fair to future audiences, and besides, we've got to rest up. The whole evening proved quite an emotional strain.

"Boudoir"

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, *February 8, 1941*

Bad Girl

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

ACCORDING to Jacques Deval, who has a comparatively blameless past as a playwright, there were a couple of pepole named Cora Ambershell and Edgar Massuber wandering about dismally in the gaslit New York of the '80's. Then Gaylord and Oriane showed up to become Cora's servants, and it turned out that Gaylord had been Cora's husband before she betrayed him and they both went to jail. At this point Enrico Palfieri, a slicker from Cairo, arrived, and when Gaylord saw him smoke a cigarette he recognized him as a fellow given to throttling rich women and leaving his cuffs behind. Oriane rather liked her mistress and was all for saving her life until Cora betrayed her ex-husband all over again, whereupon the unhappy maid went off silently and Enrico came in, took off his cuffs and started strangling Cora as the curtain went down.

* * *

At this point, I should tell you that I am not fooling. If any one was indulging in practical jokes it was Mr. Deval, the French dramatist who is now writing his plays in what is technically English. But, with a straight face that the audience does not always share with him, Mr. Deval is telling the story which I have outlined in part, and he calls it "Boudoir." Some references to Ada Rehan and the Academy of Music provide what passes for local color of the period, and then the dramatist goes on to tell us the story of pretty but nasty Cora and how she took over all the men and wrecked the musical career of her husband, who felt that all genius was in his head. When you see Cora getting poor Gaylord drunk, treating Oriane so treacherously, betraying the loving Edgar Massuber, of the celebrated Knickerbocker Massubers, and double-chossing her loyal women friends, you will hardly blame the cigarette-smoking Egyptian for grabbing her by the neck. But he shouldn't have waited for the curtain to come down. Some of us felt cheated.

* * *

All of this is so naively and foolishly narrated that it is surprising the audience didn't laugh more freely. Perhaps this gratifying restraint was chiefly due to inherent politeness, but I think it was more a tribute to Miss Else Argal, the wife of the author, who plays the badly treated and vengeful Oriane so honestly and straightforwardly that she achieved the miracle of making the character she portrayed believable and giving the scenes in which she appeared a certain dignity. None of the other players is equally successful. Miss Helen Twelvetrees, who used to be a favorite screen actress of mine when I was a film reviewer, is completely though understandably lost as the evil Cora Ambershell. It is hardly her fault that it is difficult to take a character with such a name seriously as a villainess. Taylor Holmes does as well as possible as the wealthy Massuber, and the others at least try loyally. I think the play would have had a better chance if Cora Ambershell had been strangled earlier in the proceedings.

Reprinted from
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
February 9, 1941

The Booby Prize Is Won by Boudoir

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

FREQUENTLY people remark: "To think that you critics get *paid* for going to theater."

'Tis true. Right now, however, I'm wondering whether we get paid enough. But since I've seen *Boudoir*, and you probably haven't, there's no way of our determining what would constitute a fair and equitable wage.

Boudoir, incredibly enough, is by the man who once wrote *Her Cardboard Lover* and *Tovarich*. True, he wrote these others in French and *Boudoir* in English. But *Boudoir's* English, fragrant though it is, isn't a patch on *Boudoir's* plot. *Boudoir's* plot, concerned with various goings-on in New York during the spring of 1882, would take as long to unwind as a mummy's raiment.

But just to give you a whiff of it, it deals with Cora Ambershell, a scheming and heartless beauty maintained as an old man's darling in fashionable Madison Avenue. Cora, among other things, engages her former husband as her butler, and gets swept off her feet by a mustachioed alien whose hobby is strangling women and leaving his detachable cuffs behind as a souvenir. In the end he strangles Cora, hurray.

Unfortunately the only line of dialogue I can remember is: "Show the veterinary where he may wash his hands, Gaylord."

As the heroine Helen Twelvetrees had the chance to run hogwild, and did. Most of the others in the cast suffered martyrdom more quietly. Only the author's wife, Else Argal, managed to rise above the proceedings. She played her silly role with skill and sncerity, and in her costumes of the 80's resembled one of those tall, exquisite women in a Seurat or a Manet.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *February 8, 1941*

Boudoir a Costume Play, Opens at the John Golden

Miss Twelvetrees' Acting Features Costume Play by Jacques Deval

By WILLIAM HAWKINS

HELEN TWELVETREES was on the verge of a throttling for her jewels and her pains when the final curtain went down on Boudoir at the John Golden Theater last night. By that time she had played every other member of the cast dirty.

But when she got her butler, who was her former husband, drunk and made him play the piano until he had fits, that was too much for the butler's present wife. Said wife discreetly held her peace about the fact that the lover Helen was receiving was actually a murderer.

It is not at all a bad story that Jacques Deval had to tell. Unfortunately, he had as much plot as Les Miserables, which occasionally made the characters sound as if they were filling out draft board blanks while they explained what had Gone Before.

Poses for Portrait

Boudoir is definitely a costume play. The audience sat pop-eyed while Miss Twelvetrees wandered around in her skin and some sheer pleated chiffon. It was 1882 and she was posing for a portrait, Greek style.

The same audience was equivocal until it cut loose on the hilarious side at remarks like "He kissed me in the Crystal Balloon" and "You've drooped into a butler." And it gave deserved applause to several performances.

Else Argall, wife of the playwright, is lovely looking and sensitive as the devoted second wife of the butler whose silence seals the fate of his first spouse and her pearls. And Staats Cotsworth gave an unblushing, straight performance as the butler who wanted to be a great pianist.

Holmes Plays Buffoon

Taylor Holmes, an old reliable if there ever was one, brought veracity and humor to the gentleman who paid for the boudoir. He played a buffoon but let him laugh at himself a little, and by doing so gave him dimensions he might easily have lacked.

Raymond Sovey did a rich setting for the play. It was not his fault that the action dangled a suggestion that Harpo or Groucho might be next to whip through one of the doors.

There was a time at the beginning of the evening when the audience's attention was torn between a vicuna rug thrown across a couch and a Pepsodent-conscious bear on the floor. Miss Twelvetrees settled that score by playing a scene seated somewhat precariously on the bear's head.

Though they might neither admit it nor try again, those in front of the footlights had themselves a very good time.

"Liberty Jones"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *February 6, 1941*

'Liberty Jones,' an Allegory, Opens at the Shubert Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

WHEN Philip Barry is most moved he is inclined to speak in parables and now he is moved by fear that freedom may be banished from the world. So in "Liberty Jones," which opened at the Shubert last evening, he writes allegorically of the world around us, personifying abstractions and calling music and dancing to his aid. The Miss Liberty Jones of his play is really Liberty, and her lover, Tom Smith, is the Spirit of Heroism, and they are finally wed in spite of the antagonistic attitude of the Three Shirts. You can guess what the Three Shirts are, maybe.

It takes courage to write allegory in our realistic times, when no one can afford to be caught in naïvete. This courage Mr. Barry obviously has. And it takes, also, a kind of poetic intensity which will raise the obvious devices of allegory to a realm above device. It is not so evident that Mr. Barry has this gift. "Liberty Jones" is charming and sometimes moving, and it is almost always imaginative. But it is also tenuous and unsatisfying, and allegory which does not completely satisfy comes perilously close to the ridiculous. Now and then, and particularly when he lapses into doggerel, Mr. Barry's simplification of the world seems just a little bit foolish.

Liberty, beautifully costumed by Raoul Pene du Bois and encircled by the scenery of the same artist, is ill when the curtain rises. They have been coddling her and wrapping her in cotton, but she is afraid to go to sleep because when she does she dreams that she has fallen into the clutches of the Three Shirts. Liberty's Uncle Sam, a bustling little businessman who manages factories devoted exclusively to the production of the needless, doesn't know what to do. As a last resort he calls in Tom Smith, who has tried to resign from Heroism and not been allowed. Tom is accompanied by Dick Brown who is, I think, Technical Aptitude or some such thing. The Hero falls in love with Liberty, whom Successful People ignore but who is adored by the Common People. (Summary of allegory must of necessity bristle with capitals.)

When the Three Shirts threaten, the Hero first tries compromise and appeases them with a small section of the Park. (The Park is presumably America.) Liberty chides him for this betrayal and it doesn't work anyway, since The Three are to be satisfied only with everything, including Liberty herself and supine disarmament on the part of the Hero. So he has to fight. And, after a temporary victory, he and Liberty are united. But they must still cross the Tin Bridge—Mr. Barry has me here, I'm afraid—over "dark and troubled times." It is the only bridge in the world, an Irish nurse tells them, which can be crossed before you come to it.

I do not mean to suggest that the allegory is essentially difficult, or that it is not far more smoothly and intricately worked out in "Liberty Jones" than can be suggested here. And with stylized dancing, music by Paul Bowles which fits perfectly into the varying moods and the visual beauty which Du Bois creates, it often achieves a poetic quality on the stage. But the poetry is not sufficiently sustained. When it subsides the scaffolding of allegory is all too evident.

Nancy Coleman is lovely and graceful, and often touching, as Liberty and John Beal is resolute as the Hero, but only now and then does the acting of either achieve the note of poetry. Ivy Scott is warmly human as the nurse—who is, just incidentally, really a ghost of some sort—and William Lynn, Martha Hodge, Katherine Squire and many others personify abstractions expertly.

All "Liberty Jones" needs, really, is a touch of greatness.

'LIBERTY JONES'

A play with music, in three acts, by Philip Barry; staged by John Houseman; music by Paul Bowles; scenery and costumes by Raoul Pene du Bois; dances by Lew Christensen; presented at the Shubert Theater on February 5, 1941, by the Theater Guild. The cast:

Liberty Jones.....Nancy Coleman
Liberty's Uncle.....William Lynn
Liberty's Aunt.....Martha Hodge
Tom Smith.....John Beal
Dick Brown.....Tom Ewell
Harry Robinson.....Howard Freeman
Nurse Cotton.....Katherine Squire
Nurse Maggie.....Ivy Scott
The Two Reporters:
Don Glenn, Crahan Denton
The Two Dancers:
Lew Christensen, Elise Reiman
The Three Shirts:
Victor Thorley, Louis Polan, Richard Sanders.
The Four Doctors, the Committee of Four, the Four Policemen:
Norman Lloyd, Murray O'Neill, Allan Frank, William Mende.

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, *February 6, 1941*

National Allegory

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

IN ONE of his serious moods, Philip Barry has been pondering the state of the Union, and the result is the allegorical play called "Liberty Jones." When he is being particularly earnest, Mr. Barry can also be decidedly cryptic, and, although "Liberty Jones" has its simpler aspects, it likewise goes in for complexities upon occasion. Astute allegory-detectives probably will have little trouble with it, but for me the tale of poor little Liberty, who was pursued by three evil dictators and was finally saved from them by a youthful American liberal and aviator after appeasement had failed, has proved frequently difficult and not always rewarding. The Theater Guild has given it a fine production, with Raoul Pene du Bois's beautiful settings, Paul Bowles's attractive music, Lew Christensen's pleasantly staged dances and Miss Nancy Coleman's winning performance in the title role, providing particular assistance, but Mr. Barry is not always of proper help in his modern morality play.

* * *

In his main contention, Mr. Barry is straightforward and plain-spoken enough. Liberty Jones, whose uncle is a mild little businessman named Sam, is dying of a mysterious illness because, while many respect her, there is none who loves her well enough to die for her. Those dry old doctors, Medicine, Letters, Divinity and Law, cannot save her, and the three dictators from abroad, who haunt her in her dreams, have bribed her nurse to help do away with her. To her comes Tom Smith, a young and idealistic liberal, and his friend and practical other-half, Dick Brown. Unhappily, it seems that while Tom is a fine fellow he is also an appeaser, and, when the dictators say that they will let Liberty alone if she will give them part of her beautiful park, he persuades her to consent. As soon as the dictators have won their first demand they proceed to make more of them and finally insist on complete possession of her. Then Tom decides that he would rather fight. So far nothing could be much simpler.

* * *

There probably is no reason to be puzzled, either, when Liberty's loyal old nurse comes dashing to her rescue and proves to be an ancient Irish lady with a brogue. Since Mr. Barry, not unlike your slightly bemused correspondent, is something of a Celtophile, he obviously is insisting that Ireland has for centuries nurtured the idea of freedom. Uncle Sam's wife, Gloria, a flamboyant lady who likes to give fashionable balls, apparently represents the more materialistic and flashy aspects of the national spirit. Then, there is a bridge of tin, which can be crossed before you reach it, and I must confess that I am somewhat bewildered as to its significance, even though Mr. Barry offers a clew by saying that it is the bridge over our future problems. Nor is it merely such complexities as this metaphorical bridge which make "Liberty Jones" a troublesome play. My chief objection is that, while its spirit is fine and unafraid, its manner of expressing it is frequently lacking in eloquence and almost invariably without dramatic forcefulness.

* * *

Since figures in an allegorical play are symbols rather than human beings, you could hardly demand much humanity in the acting, but here "Liberty Jones" is particularly fortunate. For Miss Coleman, who plays the central role so attractively, also brings warmth, delicacy, simplicity and youthful ardor to the part and, in a delightful way, makes Liberty a lovely and human girl as well as a symbol of Mr. Barry's patriotism. John Beal plays the hero engagingly, and Tom Ewell as the practical friend, Howard Freeman as a sort of middle-class defender of freedom, William Lynn as Uncle Sam, Miss Martha Hodge as Aunt Gloria and Miss Ivy Scott as the Irish nurse no doubt bring as much life to their roles as could possibly be achieved. "Liberty Jones" is an earnest, ambitious and heartfelt attempt to put the current national crisis in effectively imaginative allegorical terms, but my suspicion is that it is more lofty in purpose than triumphant in achievement.

"Liberty Jones"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *February 6, 1941*

"Liberty Jones" Handsomely Staged American Allegory

"Liberty Jones," an allegorical drama by Philip Barry; music by Paul Bowles. Produced by the Theatre Guild at the Shubert Theatre, New York, Feb. 5, 1941.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

PHILIP BARRY sees Liberty (Jones) fighting for her life in one of the few free parks left in the world, which would be America. She is encouraged and defended by the only hero she can summon out of a tortured dilemma and such deliriums as go with it.

Her hero is Tom Smith, a youthful record holder in the aviation division of the Navy, the record being for altitude. Which may account for his being a sympathetic visionary as well. Tom is conscripted, but eager to serve.

Liberty's enemies (in her delirium) are a variety of Fifth Columnists, wearing an assorted collection of shirts. In her first dreams they have tricked and overpowered her. But young Smith induces her to dream again, and this time the dream comes out right.

Liberty loses her fear of the Menacing Three, who would be the foreign Dictators, and a Growling Four, who would represent the native forum debaters.

Handsomely Done

She loses her hero, too, in the end, but, as we got it, he dies that she may live forever, which squares things symbolically.

"Liberty Jones," revealed at the Shubert Theatre last night in a handsomely staged production sponsored by the Theatre Guild, represents Dramatist Barry having his personal fling at clarifying both the fears and the hopes of Americans.

Time was when dramatists felt an obligation to write for the theatre. Nowadays, with competition less keen, they frequently take a year off and write to please themselves.

We, as playgoers, extract what satisfaction we can from such satisfactions as they achieve. A fair bargain, I'd say, but not always as successful as we might wish.

You can't reasonably expect a "There Shall Be No Night" or "Lady in the Dark" everytime a dramatist goes definitely on his own.

I found "Liberty Jones" less clarifying than I am sure Mr. Barry hoped it would be. Therefore I am inclined to believe it will have to struggle for a wide audience. Allegory, in order to appeal to our simple minds, as average playgoers, must in turn be pretty simply and directly told.

"Liberty Jones" is shot with scenes of filmy beauty, and rises occasionally to patriotic flairs that reach the cardiac centers without sounding either cheap or theatrical.

Audience Approval

There were sporadic outburst of applause last night as Liberty faced the menacing groups that had found her hospitality easy to take, and then sought to besmear the motives of their hostess.

Liberty was glad to assign them rooms in her mighty mansion, but she naturally rebelled when they started to tear out the plumbing. And in this, I hope and suspect, we shall be found to stand with her about 90,000,000 strong when the test comes.

John Beal was a nice choice for Tom Smith. His inherent wholesomeness is an asset, his sound technique a help, his eagerness and enthusiasm nicely in character.

Nancy Coleman, whom you may recall as the daughter in "Susan and God," takes this grown-up and difficult role as firmly in her hands as she did that of the adorable adolescent. She, like the play, had her eloquent moments.

William Lynn was a rabbit-man Uncle (Sam) Bunting, and Martha Hodge a flighty but well intentioned Aunt (Columbia) Bunting. Howard Freeman, Ivy Scott, Tom Ewell and Katherine Squire filled in competently and a rhythmic chorus, directed by Lew Christensen, helped the dream scenes.

Raoul Pene du Bois' settings and costumes are exquisite. John Houseman did the staging, which is a job his old pal, Orson Welles, was there to approve. And I thought Paul Bowles' music original and fitting.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *February 6, 1941*

Liberty Jones Personifies Conflicting Ways of Life

AFTER his delightful interlude in Philadelphia Philip Barry has paused to take soundings of the Liberty Bell which is enshrined there at Independence Hall.

Is the timbre hollow or real? This is the gist of Mr. Barry's new play with music, Liberty Jones, that the Theater Guild put on at the Shubert last night.

If you expect to hear that Mr. Barry has written a gay, sophisticated song and dance show, full of fun and fantasy, on this trying theme, you are doomed to disappointment. For Mr. Barry is not in a gossamer mood this evening. And those are troubled words that he has set down to fit the music.

Returning to a favorite form of his, he is unburdening himself by means of allegory. Even if you are allergic to allegory, the images Mr. Barry has conjured up for the occasion shouldn't mystify anyone who has been in touch with the world the last few years.

* * *

For Mr. Barry is personifying the conflicting ways of life of the world. As in any fable there are heroes, heroines and villains—and of the latter, Mr. Barry gives you a trio of them. To identify Miss Liberty Jones, look out there toward Bedloe's Island, where she has been sculptured in granite. And properly to caption the caricatures of Mr Barry's villainous trio, The Three Shirts, glance across the ocean where they stand, from left to right, red, black and brown.

Stripping away the allegory, this seems to be the point Mr. Barry is making: too much complacency has left Liberty in a weakened condition and alien quacks have been administering drugs prescribed to enslave or destroy the patient. But if you expect Mr. Barry to take the defeatist point of view you are mistaken. For he is arguing that the time has come for lethargy and fright to fall away from the harried invalid and to exorcise the devils.

For Mr. Barry has simplified the fable in terms that would even suit the juvenile department. No one is going to fail to recognize Uncle Sammy or Tom Smith and his alter ego, Dick Jones when they (he) come(s) to Miss Liberty's rescue as her honor and life are threatened. The parable is plain and a child, enlightened by more than Uncle Don, might be made to understand the implications. But that is what seemed to trouble Liberty Jones last evening. It has the aspects of an earnest high school pageant, in the lush setting of a Theater Guild production.

* * *

Indeed, Liberty Jones is prettily conceived and executed. That is a handsome boudoir in which Miss Liberty Jones regains her dissipated strength, and Raoul Pene Du Bois has clothed the figures of Mr. Barry's troubled dream in attractive garb, in addition to having designed the pleasant scenery. And Paul Bowles has contributed fetching, if not memorable, music for the dances and pantomime that fit into the natural scheme of Mr. Barry's fantasy.

For the impressive role of Miss Liberty Jones, Nancy Coleman, a comely, redheaded and eager young lady, has been virtually discovered, since this is her first major part in a Broadway production. She must have been a highly gratifying choice to Mr. Barry, for she approaches the part with the freshness, innocence and high excitement that he must have had allegorically in mind. As her knight in armor, John Beal cuts a handsome figure on the stage and the lofty forthrightness of his performance must inspire the patriotism which inspired Liberty Jones in any event.

As Liberty's Uncle Sammy, William Lynn, who you will best remember as the ingratiating racetrack psychic in Three Men on a Horse, is just as indecisive and amiable as he ever was, and as other symbols in Mr. Barry's charade you will find Martha Hodge, Tom Ewell, Howard Freeman, Katherine Squire and Ivy Scott, besides a host of dancers, choruses, singers, pedestrians, generally identified as The Seven Friends and The Eleven Friends, The Committee of Four and so on. For that is the kind of somber frolic Mr. Barry has written in Liberty Jones.

GEORGE ROSS.

"Liberty Jones"

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *February 6, 1941*

"Liberty Jones," New Guild Play, Opens at the Shubert

By WILELLA WALDORF

TWO or three years ago Clare Boothe wrote a farce entitled "Kiss the Boys Goodbye" which seemed utterly harmless and mere giddy foolishness until the play was published in book form, garnished with a statement by the author informing the public that the work was meant as an indictment of Fascism in America. This unsportsmanlike deception on the part of Miss Boothe rendered a number of hitherto trusting theatregoers suspicious of playwrights in general, with the result that a number of people who invariably approach new dramas gingerly and with care, lest an allegory lurk beneath.

Philip Barry must be acquitted at once of any tendency toward Boothetism. Mr. Barry often writes straightforward light comedies, such as "The Philadelphia Story," for instance, but when he gives forth an allegory, it's an allegory and no mistake about it. Last night at the Shubert Theatre, Mr. Barry's "Liberty Jones" was presented by the Theatre Guild, and "Liberty Jones," from the heroine (Liberty Jones herself) down to the starch in the nurses' uniforms, bristles with allegorical significance.

Saving Miss Liberty

Liberty is a sick girl, surrounded by doctors and nurses (some loyal, some in the pay of "The Three Shirts" who lurk on the balcony without). Everybody adores her but nobody seems able to do anything for her. In fact, she's a nice ornament but rather useless at the moment. Dear blundering Uncle Sam wants to save his little niece, but doesn't know precisely what to do. In desperation he calls in Tom Smith, a former Commander in the Naval Aviation, a young liberal who loves free freedom but is not disposed at first to give up any of it to help Miss Liberty. Tom, by the way, travels with his other self, Dick, and Harry Robinson's generally around as well.

There was a time along toward the beginning of "Liberty Jones" when we fully expected Mr. Barry and his assisting artists and technicians to go right ahead and take our breath away. There were times later on when they did have us holding it for a second or two, but the play is written, for the most part, in sing-song of an unspiring sort, and abounds in dribbles from old songs, nursery rhymes, childhood prayers and other scraps of Americana we all remember from days past.

It is not unamusing, or even unprovocative, to watch four gentlemen in cap and gown labeled Medicine, Letters, Divinity and Law, doing a Gilbertian quartetlette to the tune of "Comin' Through the Rye" beginning, "If an atom split an atom. . . ." But for one moment like this there are a dozen ordinary, distressingly obvious interludes that get next to nowhere and become, before the evening is over, repetitious and irksome.

Mr. Barry, it seems to us, has taken a tremendously dynamic theme close to the hearts of nearly everybody these days, and failed to do much with it beyond a sort of high school pageant staged and designed with all the professional zeal and beauty at the Guild's command.

A Beautiful Production

Raoul Pene du Bois, who never fails to create stage pictures of arresting magnificence, has again set forth some luscious color effects, notably in the next to the final scene, in a park at dawn. Nancy Coleman, John Beal, and their supporting players perform with grace and ease, and John Houseman has doubtless staged it all with as much ingenuity as Mr. Barry's script permitted. What else Mr. Houseman could have done, short of bringing on his former partner, Orson Welles, as the Man from Mars, it is difficult to imagine, but there sat Mr. Welles, last night, in an aisle seat, faultlessly clothed in white tie and tails. It is greatly to be feared if Houseman had called, and Welles had actually rushed upon the stage, he would only have been taken for an allegorical symbol for a war profiteer.

Now, beyond a doubt, is the time for the theatre to come forth with a stirring plea for just the things Mr. Barry is trying so earnestly to say in "Liberty Jones," but he has handed us his message in the form of a lovely valentine with appropriate sentiments engraved thereon in sweet but uninteresting profusion. It is tastefully done. Mr. Barry never descends to the level of mere music hall stuff, with Uncle Sam in the customary red, white and blue outfit, nor does he indulge in mere flagwaving for the sake of easy applause. But as satire, as a plea to us to save our Liberty while there is yet time, even as a patriotic allegory, it lacks the fire, drive and spirit that a cruder, more vigorous writer might have given it.

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *February 6, 1941*

Theatre Guild Produces 'Liberty Jones,' an Allegory of America Written by Philip Barry

By BROOKS ATKINSON

NO ONE will speak lightly of Philip Barry's motives. In "Liberty Jones," which the Theatre Guild put on at the Shubert last evening, he has written an elaborate allegory of freedom in America. As it comes close to modern times in the last half of the evening, it frequently breaks through portentous obscurity and creates scenes of beauty that have a pulsing meaning for the world of today. For Mr. Barry is wrestling with something real. He has put some of his heart's blood into this evocative declaration of faith. An artist as well as a loyal American, he has tried to give it a sort of dramatic incantation by writing a fantasy with music, dance and spectacle.

But the scenes of beauty that frequently break through in the last half of the evening do not clarify the fantasy as a whole. Most of it, alas, is weighted down with symbolism which this column frankly does not understand. It is very much to Mr. Barry's credit that he is not content with writing smart comedies like "The Philadelphia Story." But his frequent attempts to rise above realism into subjective expressions of faith and ideals get their wings clipped in the theatre. In spite of its incidental beauties "Liberty Jones" seems like a complicated way of saying something that ought to be intelligible to all of us.

* * *

All the characters are symbols. Liberty Jones, the lovely heroine, is Liberty, as her name implies. Tom Smith, the hero, is the idealistic phase of the American liberal, and Dick Brown, his other self, is the practical American with his feet on the ground. In the early scenes Liberty Jones is dying from indifference and neglect. None of the conventional medicine men can heal her. In her bewilderment she is drawn unaccountably to the three men in totalitarian shirts. She recovers her health when she falls in love with the young American liberal. Although he, too, is confused in the beginning, he understands at length what threatens her. After Liberty has been married to the American idealist, he drives off the gangsters who have tried to kidnap her. Together they face the world.

Obviously Mr. Barry has worked out his allegorical story in his own mind with deliberation and according to plan. But the allegory in its own right does not create lyricism enough to enkindle the emotions; and the mind, plodding around in the fog, keeps asking:

"What does this character represent?" and "What does this allusion mean?" For everything is fraught with significance unless a playgoer is completely caught up in the sweep of the fantasy. And Mr. Barry, to tell the truth, is not an overwhelming writer. One reason why "Liberty Jones" seems so tepid is because it is lacking in animal spirits. The author's characterization of Liberty is respectable, dainty, good-mannered. She lacks the gusto, the dash and the resounding vulgarity that would make her a democratic sovereign. Mr. Barry's portrait of America is hardly bracing.

* * *

These are ungrateful comments to fling at a high-minded attempt to say something vital in a virtuoso style of playmaking. The production and the acting, under John Houseman's direction, also deserve better fortune. John Beal is one of the best actors in our theatre, and he plays the hero with manliness and decision. As the incarnation of Liberty, Nancy Coleman has a tremendous part dropped on her young shoulders. If her acting does not wholly encompass it, that may be because the part is generalized and lacks definition. William Lynn is amusingly folksy as Liberty's uncle, whose name is probably Sam. As Liberty's nurse, Ivy Scott sings a song by Paul Bowles with considerable beauty.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Bowles has written a decorous score that runs all through the play, and Lew Christensen has directed some occasional dances. Although every one has conspired to make "Liberty Jones" a notable achievement in theatre and faith, most of it is earthbound. The wings are caught in the elaborate artifice of Mr. Barry's pattern.

"Liberty Jones"

Reprinted from NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM," *February 6, 1941*

Liberty Rises From Her Sickbed

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

MR. BARRY, who has always had a taste for fantasy, has of late felt a surge of patriotism. So he has run the two together, sprinkled them with music, and come up with an allegory about the U. S. A.

In these troubled times patriotism is certainly not to be taken lightly. But neither, I think, can it be allowed to gloss over foolish and whimsical and schoolboyish playwrighting. And Mr. Barry, with oceans of good will, has produced no more than a pretty little duck pond of drama. His central idea is praiseworthy enough, but his general approach is at best exuberant and at worst silly; and much of the writing—from the pen of an expert at sophisticated comedy—is merely naive and cute.

As to the plot: Miss Liberty Jones, the pretty niece of Uncle Sam, lies ill. Drs. Education, Letters, Divinity and Law can't discover her ailment. Three sinister foreign gentlemen, The Shirts, work away trying to get her into their clutches. Then her old Irish nurse, signifying The Cradle of Liberty, rushes to her bedside (shure, and a Barry would have liberty born in Ireland), and a young naval aviator named Tom Smith, who I suppose might be called Youthful American Idealism, turns up to see if he can help.

Gets Going

Well, Tom falls in love with Libby and promptly gets going. He first tries to bribe the sinister Shirts but finds it won't work, and finally boots the guys into kingdom come. Liberty and Tom are married and cross the dark bridge they are afraid of (Facing Reality) without coming to harm.

It's all extremely allegorical, as you can see. I haven't room even to scratch Mr. Barry's allegorical surface. But I shouldn't be surprised if Liberty's bed represented the U. S. Mint, if the pills on her night table stood for the Republican Party, or the carpet in her room signified the Mississippi Valley cornbelt.

I think it's a fine idea to say "Go blast Fascism to hell and not back." But I think it's a frightful idea to say it in baby talk. This isn't the time to sugarcoat the bitterest pill our country has ever had to swallow. This isn't the time, either, to pretend that Fascism can be so speedily thrust off our shores; or so smugly to ignore the rest of the world; or so glibly to lift Liberty right out of a sickbed onto a pedestal.

But even as entertainment, *Liberty Jones* seems cuter than things need be to be entertaining. Much of Paul Bowles' music is pleasant and lively, and there are some sprightly musical-comedy interludes. But Mr. Barry, in his sincerity, has lost the light touch he often has to perfection. Some of his dialogue seems unpleasantly frisky, and some of the allegorical parts sound like a translation from the lesser Maeterlinck: "My mother's wedding dress, see, it hangs in the closet!"

The cast performed pleasantly, but seemed a trifle affected by the lofty nature of their several impersonations. Nancy Coleman made an attractive Liberty, John Beal a likeable if somewhat Boy-Scoutish Tom, and William Lynn an amusingly bewildered—and unbewhiskered—Uncle Sam.

Reprinted from NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN, *February 6, 1941*

'Liberty Jones' Has Premiere at Shubert

Philip Barry's New Play, with Music by Paul Bowles, Tells Patriotic Story in Stylized Symbolism.

By DOROTHY KILGALLEN

PHILIP BARRY, who seasonally alternates between whip-smart drawing room comedy and significant fantasy, has made it fantasy this time, and given the playgoers "Liberty Jones," a political allegory set to music, which opened at the Shubert Theatre last night.

It is the fate of freedom which concerns Mr. Barry's typewriter currently. He has turned his bright talent for words to the patriotic cause of determining how to preserve liberty in the United States, and in a handsome if chaotic fairy-tale he has concluded that liberty can be saved only by war between this country and the aggressor nations.

This prescription is served up in three acts of stylized symbolism. Beautifully mounted and clothed, it is performed gracefully by a large and fine cast, and relieved by excellent background music and incidental dancing.

But despite the urgency of the theme the sincerity of the prose, "Liberty Jones" has moments — whole scenes, in fact — where through sheer obviousness it takes in the aspect of a frightfully well done high school patriotic pageant.

Some of the personified abstractions were so blatant that it seemed as if Mr. Barry were hitting his audience over the head with them; other characters were so obscure as to need a libretto, or, at the very least, an appendix. (My usherette handed me no libretto.)

Heroine's Identity

The play's heroine is easy enough to identify. She is Liberty Jones (whose Uncle is named Sam) and she is ill, tormented, weak and afraid as the drama opens in her red, white and blue boudoir. She is attended by a pessimistic nurse of darkling mien (the Fifth Column, was my guess) and she is haunted by three men in shirts (Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, I am practically positive).

There is brought in to cure Liberty a stalwart young man named Tom Smith, who is accompanied by his Other Self, Dick Brown. Tom is an heroic aviator in the naval reserve, from which he would like to resign, and he is as confused as he is brave.

Tom—or Dick—was taken by the audience to be Mr. Barry's representative of Mr. Average American.

With Liberty and Tom it is love at first sight, and she informs him that her old nurse, Maggie, once told her that her true love would be a man who would dream of her, dance with her, and be willing to die for her. (Maggie comes into the play, from England, I thought she symbolized Faith or Religion, but there were those near by who took her to represent Wendell Willkie, the American Legion, or the Florida Citrus Growers Association.)

Slumber Sequence

Well, the first half of the second act lapses into a slumber sequence, and Tom dreams of Liberty, fulfilling qualification No. 1. In the second portion of the act he dances a patriotic cake-walk with her, subscribing to requirement No. 2. What's left? Now, you know what's left.

In act three the sinister fellows in the dark shirts creep nearer and nearer to our heroine, frightening her and cowing her friendly people into bent-neck submission.

Tom tries to cope with them by appeasement, then by playing their own dishonest game, but both methods fail, until the darkshirts have not only gobbed up most of The Park (The Civilized World? The Western Hemisphere? The U. S. A.?) but have stripped liberty of her pearls, her hair-ribbon, and her star-shaped brooch. (The Panama Canal, the Virgin Islands, and Guam?)

Then Tom and Liberty get married. They are celebrating the wedding at a reception on the roof of Uncle Sam's patriotic penthouse, nibbling at a wedding cake which, Nurse Maggie explains "you can eat and have, too," when in stride the three villains, fat from nibbling on the land that was once free. They have everything else, now they want Liberty.

And what, Tom asks, will they give him in return for Liberty?

His life, they say.

Tom buckles on his fighting coat and his sword. "No!" he cries. "Give me Liberty, or give me——." And although Stalin wounds him, he slays the three of them.

Crossing Bridge

Then he and Liberty soar into the air to cross "the tin bridge across the troubled darkness." Liberty returns, but Tom does not. Proving, I suppose, that if the U. S. goes abroad to fight, liberty will come back, but the A.E.F. won't.

Mr. Barry's conviction in his subject is equalled only by the honesty and frequent brilliance with which his cast performs its muddled chores. John Beal, who has never given a poor performance, is admirable as Tom; Nancy Coleman, a lovely and talented ingenue, plays Liberty with as much strength and clarity as Duse could have given that trying role.

Martha Hodge gives an excellent sleight-of-hand performance first as Liberty's flighty aunt, then as Liberty's mother. Ivy Scott, Tom Ewell and William Lynn all do capably.

The character of "Harry Robinson," played by Howard Freeman, eluded this observer completely. After careful thought and some lobby consultation between the second and third acts, I am prone to believe that he symbolized the Lend-Lease bill.

Or possibly Senator Wheeler.

"Tanyard Street"

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *February 5, 1941*

"Tanyard Street" Opens At the Little Theatre

By WILELLA WALDORF

WITH three former members of Dublin's Abbey Theatre Company as a nucleus, Jack Kirkland produced last night at the Little Theatre an Irish play by Louis D'Alton entitled "Tanyard Street," originally presented in Dublin two years ago. Even the Abbey can't find masterpieces all the time, and "Tanyard Street" is a routine drama about an Irishman who returns to his native town of Annakill after fighting in the Spanish Civil War, wounded and apparently doomed to a wheel chair for the rest of his life.

His wife, deserted by her husband after a few weeks of marriage when he heard the call from Spain, is so eager to bring him back to health that she does a little unofficial miracle-working to help bolster his faith, and first thing you know he's walking around as if the war had never happened. Unfortunately, he is so overcome at the distinction of having received special favors from the Lord that he decides to become a priest. He can only do so if his wife takes a vow to remain alone and miserable all her life, and it is up to her to choose at the final curtain whether to sacrifice any hope of happiness to the devout selfishness of her miracle-cured spouse or run off with his brother, who is more liberal-minded and also generally less depressing as a human being.

All this sounds dour, and it is, but the author has tossed in large doses of comic relief from time to time in the character of Mosey Furlong, who serves no particular purpose in the plot but amuses the audience. Played by Barry Fitzgerald last night, Mosey had nearly everybody at the Little Theatre in gales of laughter every time he so much as squinted. Mosey is a hypochondriac given to discussing his ailments at length and dosing himself with baking soda, also bickering in time honored Irish-play fashion with a neighbor named Davey Deasy.

Comic Relief

Mr. Fitzgerald, who can do this sort of thing in his sleep, gave it his all. After diagnosing his internal disturbances, gastronomic and intestinal, and taking pink tooth powder in water under the impression that it was what the doctor ordered, Mr. Fitzgerald made sundry frowsy appearances in the early morn, only partially clothed, sleepily confused the table cloth with his shirt tail and otherwise diverted the audience. He was not, perhaps, quite as hysterically funny as last night's laughter indicated, but he was, beyond a doubt, a relief every time he wandered in.

The wounded soldier was played with ascetic fervor by Arthur Shields, who also directed the play, and Aideen O'Connor, the third member of the Abbey company, flourished her authentic accent to some effect as a helpful neighbor. The role of the long-suffering wife fell to Margo, of all people, who suggested an Irish brogue now and again, and gave to the role the particular sort of touching sincerity she always manages to convey. Lloyd Gough, Zamah Cunningham, Art Smith and Hale Norcross did their best to carry on the authentic Irish tradition, but against odds.

The acting in "Tanyard Street," both of the Irish and the pseudo-Irish contingents, was a good deal better than the play, which sounded like a remarkable number of other plays without ever achieving any great distinction of its own. There seem to be a number of people, however, who shriek with laughter at the mere sight of Barry Fitzgerald with his vest hanging awry and his trousers falling down. To them "Tanyard Street" will doubtless carry a certain message, even if it doesn't happen to be precisely what the author was getting at.

'TANYARD STREET'

A play in three acts by Louis D'Alton; directed by Arthur Shields; setting by Mercedes; presented at the Little Theater on February 4, 1941, by Jack Kirkland: The cast:

Mosey Furlong	Barry Fitzgerald
Mrs. McMorna	Zamah Cunningham
Nanno Deasy	Aideen O'Connor
Hessy McMorna	Margo
Hugh McMorna	Lloyd Gough
Davey Deasy	Art Smith
Father Conn	Hale Norcross
Kevin McMorna	Arthur Shields

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *February 5, 1941*

"Tanyard Street" Drama of Love And Religion in an Irish Village

"Tanyard Street," drama by Louis D'Alton. Produced by Jack Kirkland at the Little Theatre, New York, Feb. 4, 1941.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

"TANYARD STREET," as the title of a play, may mean something in the mid-land town of Annakill, Ireland, which is the locale of the new drama opening at the Little Theatre last night. But it doesn't, or didn't, mean anything in New York.

This morning I may tell you that it is the name of the street on which the McMornas lived, and I assume they represent the upper middle class of the village.

The afternoon we meet them Kevin McMorna is coming home. He has been away fighting with Franco in Spain, and everybody, especially Hessy, his young wife, is pretty full of that Abbey theatre excitement on such occasions inspire.

Well, when Kevin arrives, he is carried in, as a war casualty, paralyzed below the waist. He is sustained in life only by a great stimulation of his religious faith. In his dreams he has been seeing an apparition of the Blessed Lady and he knows he is going to get well.

No Like

Meantime he will have none of Hessy. In his thought he has gradually grown away from his young wife, whom he had left ever so shortly after their wedding.

Hessy, who has been idealizing her love for Kevin while he has been away, is distressed beyond words. The fact that Kevin's handsome brother, Hugh, has been loving her right lustily all these months, and been kept at a distance with some difficulty, serves to complicate the situation.

So there you have the drama and the conflict. Hugh wants Hessy. Hessy is true to Kevin. And Kevin wishes they would all go away and leave him alone with his visions.

Something very like a miracle happens and Kevin walks again. Still he is not interested in Hessy. Now he wants to prove his gratitude to God by becoming a priest. A difficult person, Kevin. The clergy is willing to accept him only if Hessy will also embrace a life of celibacy.

It seems a little unfair to insist that no Irish drama is really a good Irish drama unless the Abbey Theatre presents it as an item of its repertory. Yet many of them seem detached and futile to me when they are given as competitive bids in a theatre season.

May Find a Public

The answer to that is the success enjoyed by "Juno and the Paycock" once it found its public last season. Of course Louis D'Alton, author of "Tanyard Street," is not another Sean O'Casey by a considerable margin, but his drama is literate, moderately interesting and well played.

Barry Fitzgerald is in it, fussing around amusingly with shirtail and galluses, as is frequently his custom. And with his Irish mask in perfect perspective. His audience began laughing at him at his entrance and kept at it the evening through.

Margo plays the distressed Hessy. It isn't an easy assignment. There seems little to justify her love for Kevin, and without that factor being convincing there is nothing much on which she can hang her emotional scenes.

A good performance by Lloyd Gough as the disillusioned and lightly rebellious Hugh, and competent support by Arthur Shields, Aideen O'Connor, Art Smith, Zamah Cunningham and Hale Norcross.

A pleasant interior by Mercedes, whoever he or she may be, and good Abbey theatre direction by Mr. Shields. "Tanyard Street," I'd say, is up to the Irish.

"Tanyard Street"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *February 5, 1941*

'Tanyard Street,' With Barry Fitzgerald, Opens at the Little

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

ALL "Tanyard Street," which opened at the little Theater last evening, is divided into two parts. There is a bright, engaging part which consists of Barry Fitzgerald, acting the role of a dyspeptic grumbler with all of the bubbling comedy of which he is capable. On the other hand there is a rather larger part which reveals the author, Louis D'Alton, fumbling wordily with a spiritually exciting situation and making almost precisely nothing of it.

Mr. D'Alton is writing about an Irish miracle. Once, he says, there was a young Irishman who came home crippled from fighting for Franco in Spain—came home to a passionate but loyal wife, a brother tormented by love for the wife and certain miscellaneous characters who had remarkably little to do with the story. The young soldier believed that he had visions in which the Virgin brought him flowers and these he took as a sign that he would, against all the pessimistic conclusions of the doctors, recover. One morning the flowers were lying by his bed and that morning he walked. About such a story, obviously, an electrifying play might be written.

"Tanyard Street" is not that play. It is written turgidly and with scarcely a flicker of that way an Irish writer usually has with words. It is written without direction. After paying as close attention as the author's style would permit, I have only the foggiest idea of what it was the author intended to say. There is talk of love and of religion; in the end the man who has been healed decides to become a priest and his wife, not without protest, plans to take vows of celibacy. The brother leaves, confused and, rather obscurely, resentful. There is no way of telling where Mr. D'Alton felt this got him, but it got him neither the beauty nor the drama inherent in the theme.

With all this Mr. Fitzgerald has nothing much to do. He appears frequently, usually with his suspenders hanging down, and talks about his digestion. He talks about it with a comic fury which seems to come entirely from his own rich perception of character. He makes Mosey Furlong almost a play in himself. And the others, deep as they are in the drama's murk, give good accounts of themselves and of their characters. Lloyd Gough does much with the part of the brother and Margo, if certainly not Irish, is affecting as the wife. Arthur Shields brings clarity of style to the role of the soldier and Aideen O'Connor, Zamah Cunningham, Art Smith and Hale Norcross are good in incidental roles.

But in spite of their efforts, "Tanyard Street" is Barry Fitzgerald on one side and muddle on the other.

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *February 5, 1941*

Barry Fitzgerald Appears in 'Tanyard Street,' an Abbey Theatre Drama of Ireland

By BROOKS ATKINSON

NOTHING about "Tanyard Street" is more miraculous than the fact that Barry Fitzgerald is in it. As Louis D'Alton's drama develops at the Little Theatre, where it opened last evening, you realize that the author is primarily interested in the religious aspects of a healing. But you would never suspect that from the disconnected part Mr. Fitzgerald has to play nor from the Captain Boyle bravado of his playing; and while he is on the stage it is difficult to think of anything else.

For he is the incarnation of the comic spirit. People start laughing the moment he pokes his squint face on the set and starts choking the English language in the back of his mouth. In "Tanyard Street" he plays the part of a squalid hypochondriac who shuffles around the corners of the drama without having anything to do with the main action. Head held stiffly back, chin thrust forward, mouth screwed up in a querious expression, he talks peevishly of his infirmities, looking messier and messier as the evening wears on. No one else can tangle himself up so grotesquely in shirts, suspenders and trousers, and no one can look so bedraggled when he is dressed in his best for church-going. Mr. Fitzgerald must sleep in his clothes for weeks to achieve the ripeness of his appearance on the stage.

* * *

But nothing is farther from the mind of the author of this Abbey Theatre drama. "Tanyard Street" is the story of an Irish boy who fought in Spain and came home half paralyzed from a wound. Every one, including the local priest, has despaired of his recovery. But the veteran of the Spanish wars always has faith. He has visions of divine intercession. After a night during which flowers have mysteriously moved from the shrine in his room to his bed, he awakens completely healed, and word goes far and wide that a miracle has occurred. His faith has been abundantly rewarded. Every one rejoices except his wife, who has longed for his recovery but who finds herself an encumbrance on a holy man after the miracle.

"Tanyard Street" is sincerely written, with many hints of earnest thought, and a theatergoer feels that he ought to be enthralled by it. Under Arthur Shields's sympathetic direction, it is acted by Margo, who is an actress of great richness, and Aideen O'Connor, Zamah Cunningham, Lloyd Gough, Art Smith and Mr. Shields, all of whom have given excellent performances in recent dramas. But Mr. D'Alton has great difficulty in making his drama flow along the pathway of a theme. As if they were aware of some defect in the play, the actors are overwrought, raising their voices to a sharp pitch, their faces tense with simulated emotion.

Probably Mr. Fitzgerald does not help the story much by being so pungently comic on the outskirts of the theme. After he has stuttered and wabbled for two acts through the character of an Irish charlatan it is a little surprising to discover that the author of "Tanyard Street" is writing a modern miracle play. Mr. Fitzgerald is playing O'Casey to Louis D'Alton's tune.

Reprinted from NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM," *February 5, 1941*

Very Mystical, Very Monotonous

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IN *Tanyard Street* Mr. D'Alton has drawn a great many spiritual diagrams—diagrams that may well possess an eternal importance, but that last night seemed only pallid and old-fashioned. In a little Irish village, last night, faith achieved a miracle of healing after science had failed; and then, when that miracle of faith lay crushed and bleeding, came a miracle of love to make it whole again.

I cannot set down the theme of *Tanyard Street* in any less poetic language, but ordinary prose should carry me through the rest of this report. For Mr. D'Alton, tackling a very difficult subject—one that is not only a strain on modern credulity but also fairly lacking in modern interest—has not been equal to the job. His play is adequately written, in a rather too literary way, but it is woodenly dramatized, and its high spiritual crises seem fuller of rhetoric than passion, and melodramatic rather than moving. Least satisfying of all are its characters who, even in the most astonishing situations, seem utterly commonplace.

Fought for Franco

Mr. D'Alton tells of a pious Irishman who comes home, after fighting for Franco, paralyzed from the waist down. The doctors say there is no hope of a cure, but he, seeing apparitions of the Virgin, believed that faith would cure him. It does. Afterwards, to keep a vow he had made, he seeks to put away the wife who loves him and become a priest. She then—to hold him—confesses it was a ruse of hers, not an act of God's, that helped effect the miracle. But when his faith crumbles, she, out of her love for him, says that she has lied.

The trouble with *Tanyard Street* is not simply that its premise is hard to swallow. It's equally hard to swallow some of its situations, which seem as mathematically worked out as they are mystically inspired. It's hard to be interested in its cold, pious-nosed hero, in his over-intense but under-vitalized wife, or in his atheist brother who, amid all the spiritual gymnastics, godlessly tries to seduce his sister-in-law.

Only Barry Fitzgerald, a master of comedy as always, puts life into the proceedings. He plays a shiftless hypochondriac whose account of his ailments, though vastly overworked, remains consistently diverting because Mr. Fitzgerald not only knows every trick of the trade but has a God-given personality. But nobody else in the cast, including Margo, could wriggle out of the straitjacket provided by the author.

"Tanyard Street"

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, *February 5, 1941*

Miracle in Eire

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

THE new Irish play at the Little Theater is pretty disillusioning on the subject of miracles. It is not that "Tanyard Street" in any way tends to deny their existence. In fact, after wavering a bit on the matter for a while, it accepts the sudden cure that came to wounded Kevin McMorna as being truly miraculous. The point it appears to make, though, is that such miracles carry only unhappiness with them. It seems to be the author's contention that they bring out all the selfishness in those who receive them, causing them to demand the cruelest of sacrifices on the part of others, while the recipients revel with gloating piety in the proof of their own holiness. This, at least, is what Louis D'Alton, the author of "Tanyard Street," gives evidence of saying in his play. He is so vague about it that one cannot be absolutely sure.

* * *

This is the story of an ascetic young Irishman who went off to fight for Franco in the recent war in Spain. Wounded in action, he returns to his native town paralyzed from the waist down. There is a miracle, though, and, after his sudden and mysterious cure, he decides that he must leave his devoted wife and become a priest. She, however, must give him up willingly and take a vow of chastity before he can enter the priesthood, and, when she is hesitant about doing any such thing he grows bitterly indignant at her and is threatened with a relapse. So the sacrificial wife gives him up sadly but nobly. All of this is told amid such rambling and undramatic vagueness that it is enormously difficult to be certain as to just what point the playwright is trying to make. Obviously he has a point in mind, but he has so much difficulty in resolving his theme or even approaching it that in the end you remain uncertain as to whether he is being bitter or devotional.

* * *

Whatever his purpose, he assuredly succeeds in making his wounded soldier a most selfish and disagreeable figure and his rebellious, anti-clerical brother the most likable of the serious characters in the play. His priest, although apparently intended as a sympathetic figure, seems so weak and irresolute that he sacrifices all claim to audience regard. All of this makes for both confusion and dramatic apathy and results in a play that seems flat, colorless and without any of the forthright clash of ideas and emotions which might have made "Tanyard Street" one of the important works of the Irish theater. Fortunately, though, there is one rich role in this otherwise ineffectual narrative. It is that of the complaining, argumentative, shiftless uncle of the family, and the part is so delightfully played by Barry Fitzgerald that the minutes when he is on the stage take on an air of delight. No play in which Mr. Fitzgerald has a characteristic role can be a complete waste of time.

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Naturally Mr. Fitzgerald dominates the proceedings, though it is the misfortune of the play that his role is not the central one. There is a sunnily charming performance, too, by Miss Aideen O'Connor. The gayer people of the cast are assuredly the comfort of "Tanyard Street." Of the graver actors, the excellent Arthur Shields is completely bogged down in the ambiguities in the character of the wounded soldier he is playing. Although Margo is hardly convincing in the part of an Irish girl she plays the ill-used wife with that honest emotional skill of hers, which is always so effective. Hale Norcross is able to do little with the role of the rather timorous priest and Art Smith is by no means at his best as a minor comedy figure in the narrative. Lloyd Gough plays the rebellious anti-clerical effectively. "Tanyard Street" offers a good comic character but when it grows serious it is vague and powerless.

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *February 5, 1941*

Barry Fitzgerald Stars in Tanyard Street

Kirkland Presents Story First Given by Abbey Players

AS AN entertaining vendor you can't accuse Jack Kirkland of being uncatholic about his taste in plays. Last night at the Little Theater he was submitting an Irish play Tanyard Street by Louis D'Alton which won its first stripes in service with the Abbey Players in DubHn. As Willela Waldorf says, there are two kinds of Irish plays, those without Barry Fitzgerald and those that can't get along without him. Tanyard Street, it is this corner's notion, doesn't seem to be able to get along even with his superlative, rambunctious characterization.

There is nothing wrong with what Mr. Fitzgerald does or even says in Tanyard Street and for that matter there may be nothing wrong with what Tanyard Street does or says, either, except that it seems to be overcome by the dullness of doing too little and saying too much.

What Tanyard Street may have been when it was performed in Dubin is, of course, a matter of investigation. It may be that those sterling Abbey Players took the chill of tedium off it. But save for Barry Fitzgerald, Arthur Shields and Aideen O'Connor, Mr. Kirkland has been forced to recruit his Celtic characters from local precincts and it was, perhaps, asking too much of Pan-Americanism to invite the Latin, dark-complexioned Margo to impersonate a long-suffering colleen or Art Smith, formerly of the Group Theater, to imitate one of Eire's more turbulent sons.

About the narrative struggle formulated in Tanyard Street this corner is unprepared to go into any full-length discussion, for undoubtedly the author has plumbed the mystic Irish character a whole lot more profoundly than this department or the next one. Suffice to say that the struggle plainly appears to be over the abundance of religious faith or the lack of it and the alternate effects of either on the inmates of the McMorna household.

For Mr. D'Alton's play is about Kevin McMorna who returns from the Spanish Civil War with both legs paralyzed. Abandoned by medical science, he is cured, presumably, by a miracle and it is this miracle which comes between him and his forbearing, patient, oft-tempted wife. The inmate of the McMorna household upon whom his mystical halocaust has little or no effect is Mr. Fitzgerald who is more concerned with his hypochondria than miracles, and who considers that beside his fleshly ills these torments of the soul are no worse than a mild toothache.

An amiable, old, blustering, pugnacious, sloppy, irritable codger is Mr. Fitzgerald and when he mixes for himself a pink concoction which turns out to be toothpowder, on the theory that if it is in a can it must be good for what ails him, or when he is jabbering about matters far beyond his ken he is bound to humor you with the same delight as when he delivered himself of that ultimate prognosis of humanity's condition, "the wurrld is in a state of chassis."

Miss Aideen O'Connor's rich, musical brogue is as delightful to hear as it always has been when she has played with the Abbey Players here and Arthur Shields who portrays the miraculously healed veteran, besides having staged the opus, is craftsmanlike as always. But it is to be feared the Margo is out of place here.

GEORGE ROSS.

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NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN
February 5, 1941

'Tanyard St.' Has Premiere At Little

JACK KIRKLAND'S latest production, "Tanyard Street," from the pen of Louis D'Alton, added a serious note to the Broadway scene when it bowed in at the Little Theatre last evening.

The play deals with the problems of an Irishman from the Midlands, who leaves his home and bride to fight for the Insurgent cause in the recent Spanish Civil War.

Returning from the conflict, paralyzed and embittered, Kevin learns to hate his young bride.

While the bride suffers, and Kevin's cynical younger brother tries to win her affections, the soldier has visions, and takes them as an omen that he will be cured, despite doctors' opinions and the parish priest's efforts to discourage him.

To the surprise of all, however, he awakens one morning and finds that he can walk. The miracle, rather than healing the breach between Kevin and his wife, widens it.

Arthur Shields, as Kevin, shoulders the directorial burden, with Margo as the bride, Lloyd Gough as the cynical younger brother and Barry Fitzgerald as a hypochondriac boarder.

Art Smith puts in an appearance as a quarrelsome Irishman, Aideen O'Connor, a believable ingenue, plays the role of a friendly village girl, and Hale Norcross interprets the role of the priest.